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Corporate brand-rapture theory: antecedents, processes, and consequences

Stephen Lloyd

Business School, AUT University, Auckland, New Zealand, and

Arch Woodside

*Department of Marketing, Carroll School of Management, Boston College,
Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, USA*

Abstract

Purpose – This study seeks to provide analytical insights into corporate brand-rapture (CBR), its antecedents and consequences, and contributes to methodology for modeling CBRs.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper defines the construct and develops a theory that explains how corporate brand-rapture works and is testable empirically.

Findings – CBR merits further investigation as a potentially valid, operational concept in marketing that underpins the conscious and unconscious drivers of the corporate brand's strongest stakeholders and that lays the foundations of research into corporate brand-rapture communication.

Research limitations/implications – The paper, while remaining conceptual, identifies a dynamic concept of interest to researchers and to corporate brand marketing management and proposes seven fundamental propositions for modeling CBR.

Practical implications – The paper provides researchers and corporate brand marketing with a more rigorous understanding of the foundations of engagement with a corporate brand.

Originality/value – This paper is the first so far on CBR theory and provides insights that are important to corporate brand marketers and their communications strategies.

Keywords Brand-rapture, Corporate branding, Stakeholder engagement, Co-creation, Marketing communications

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Self-expression is an important driver for market-based preferences and choices (Wallstrom *et al.*, 2010). The literature includes development of the concept of brand co-creation (Hatch and Schultz, 2010). “Corporate brand-rapture” (CBR) is a co-creation concept involving the corporate brand and the brand's most devoted stakeholders; stakeholders help shape rapture; for them the brand has an element of the magical. CBR elicits a form of clan-member recognition and behavior. For a period of their life the brand is a way of life for its loyal stakeholders. During these periods the enrapt-stakeholder usually engages highly with the brand and the brand interaction processes become ritual enactments in the sense of totems and fetishes (Fernandez and Lastovicka, 2011; Lévi-Strauss, 1971).

The working definition of CBR that this study proposes is the co-created, sacrosanct state of passionate attachment that a loyal stakeholder achieves with a particular corporate brand. This definition specifies: the object (brand), the attribute (co-created, sacrosanct state of passionate attachment), and the rater-entity (loyal stakeholder) (Rossiter, 2008). This definition assumes that loyal stakeholders agree about what they consider to be the components of a brand's co-created, sacrosanct state of passionate attachment. A further assumption is that the “co-created, sacrosanct state



of passionate attachment” is a second-order formed attribute: a very abstract formed attribute (the main components add to form the attribute) that has formed attributes as components (Rossiter, 2002, pp. 310, 314). Such attachments are experiences that are emotionally overwhelming and embody an archetypal theme (Jung, 1969) and enrapt stakeholders engage with these experiences as frequently as specific contexts require. For CBR the stakeholder experiences a primal force for which she may develop a dependency.

No known theory of CBR is available currently. It is argued in this paper that CBR provides a more powerful form of source credibility than other metaphorical brand concepts, including corporate brand personality. The study here provides analytical-based propositions into the nature and characteristics of CBR. Indicators of loyal stakeholders’ co-created, sacrosanct state of passionate attachment include deep commitment to the brand, the brand receiving nearly a 100 percent share-of-product category purchases by the stakeholder, a high-usage rate of the brand in comparison to almost all other brands, and frequent public displays of physical affection between the brand and consumer.

This paper reviews relevant literature on examining the deep implicit and explicit emotional attachment, beliefs, attitudes, decision processes, and behavior toward corporate brands. Insights into such emotionally laden, stakeholder-brand relations serve to inform researchers, corporate brand management, and stakeholders of deeply rooted thoughts and feelings about a brand; about the role rapture brands play in stakeholders’ stories crafted through implicit thinking, and about the likelihood of brand acceptance and rejection (Woodside, 2008, p. 480).

Marketing visionaries such as Apple, Google, and luxury brands such as Cartier, Rolex, Prada, and Porsche have come to define marketing and brand passion in the digital age. This study explores the archetypal (Jung, 1969) roots of some of the practices they employ such as viral marketing, social networking, and service sampling, eliciting and engaging in co-creativity with stakeholders. These and the various forms of social media, and inbound marketing concepts businesses across all industries use today, can benefit from a form of creative engagement called CBR. CBR is a valid, operational marketing concept of interest to researchers and to marketing management. By exploring CBR this paper aims to examine the interrelationships between stakeholder characteristics, ritualized behavior the corporate brand.

Literature review

The literature review provides an analysis of the roots of CBR theory. The roots are found in the research into corporate legitimacy and reputation; the influence of unconscious thinking on behavior; the metaphoric dimensions of the brand, which include the brand personality metaphor; drama and the dramaturgical perspective.

The business science literature includes the concepts of legitimation and legitimacy (Delmar and Shane, 2004), as do the literatures of economics (Etzioni, 1987), legal studies (Crenshaw, 1988), organizational science (Adams *et al.*, 1998; Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990; Hannan and Carroll, 1992), philosophy (Gellner, 1974), political science (Habermas, 1975), public policy (Heritier, 1999), psychology (Tyler, 2006), social policy (Harrison and Mort, 2003), and sociology (Ridgeway and Berger, 1986; Weber, 1964). A further dimension of social legitimation is the belief that members of society ordain institutions with legitimacy, in the sense of a right to exist and to act in a particular way (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975).

Organizational legitimation is considered a process in which power is legitimized into authority whereby decisions are seen to be right and proper (Zelditch, 2001). A psychological perspective sees legitimation as a process whereby an authority, institution, or social arrangement leads those connected to it to believe that it is appropriate, proper, and just; they feel an obligation to defer to decisions and rules, following them voluntarily and out of a sense of obligation (Tyler, 2006). Such authority can provide a course for corporate credibility (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000a,b; Newell and Goldsmith, 2001). In a Weberian sense CBR is a source of corporate brand credibility by providing a source of charismatic legitimacy, founded on gifts of grace possessed by a leader (Weber, 1964). An example from recent organizational history could be David Ogilvy, founder of Ogilvy & Mather, Steve Jobs, or the Saatchi Brothers in their heyday. It has been observed that the range of legitimation agencies and processes is wide and can include authorities, institutions, politics, and status hierarchies (Zelditch, 2001).

This paper builds on the work of Woodside *et al.* (2008) who, in the consumer marketing literature, attest to consumers' experiences of powerful myths that reflect psychological archetypes. Woodside *et al.* (2008) provide insight into drama enactment between a consumer and a special brand on a conscious and an unconscious level. The paper here explores further the nature of the experience stakeholders have with special brands. CBR is the extreme state of mind and body which provides the interactive emotional environment in which a corporate marketer's brand drama matches with the intended stakeholder's archetypal, mostly, or entirely unconscious yearnings (Woodside *et al.*, 2008, p. 113). The paper here now considers those varieties of brand experience relevant to the discussion of CBR.

The influence of unconscious thinking on behavior

Research suggests that people are limited in their ability to understand their own cognitive processes (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). The marketing psychology literature attests to the validity of a theoretical foundation for the study of unconscious thinking and its influence on behavior (Woodside, 2008, p. 481).

Woodside (2008) identifies three cornerstones that provide unique propositions for the origins of unconscious thinking: the proposition that archetypes guide aspects of behavior (Jung, 1969); the illusory nature of the mind unable to identify the causes of its own actions (Wegner, 2002); an unconscious cultural influence that distinguishes one group from another (Hofstede, 2003).

A large body of empirical evidence supports the proposition that implicit and explicit beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and mental processing are parallel systems that can result in different outcomes, for example, future behavior or interpretations of recent behavior (Wilson, 2002). Theories of unconscious thinking contribute valuable insights to marketing communications message strategy and to an understanding of how and why implicit thinking affects beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and mental processes. The marketing communications of Benetton, Accenture, Rayovac batteries, and Coca-Cola are effective because they achieve implicit recognition, which is achieved when a brand associates visually with a primal force: an archetype (Woodside, 2010). The paper here argues that the marketing communications of corporate brands, especially luxury brands, can be effective for the same reason.

Woodside (2010) suggests that when the brand and the consumer interact and move together toward the realization of an archetypal association, they cross, together, a line which demarcates the beginning of implicit thinking. What is important here is the

extent of co-creation. This is not a passive relationship, but rather a drama enactment in which the consumer – and the stakeholder – co-authors the communication.

Metaphoric dimensions of the brand

Anthropomorphic symbols such as the Merrill Lynch bull and the Lloyds TSB black horse attest to the effective use of metaphor by corporate brands. Metaphor is a widely used visual and linguistic device of importance to cognitive change (Breal, 1897). Black (1962) rejects the view of metaphors as elliptical comparisons or as ornamental substitutes for literal language. Black (1962) anticipates the contribution of Goatly (1997) by proposing a drama enactment view of metaphor: the tenor of the metaphor interacts with a metaphorical vehicle to produce an emergent meaning. Similarly, but more formally, a metaphor occurs when a unit of discourse is used to refer unconventionally to an object, process, or concept or co-occurrence of words in an unconventional way (Goatly, 1997).

The language of marketing is more metaphoric than the language of any other social science (Zaltman *et al.*, 1982). Researchers explore the various metaphors that have been applied to the concept of brand so as to provide an understanding of what a brand is and to identify the different perspectives that are possible from different metaphors (Davies and Chun, 2003; Rook, 1985). Metaphors can be mental models for sense making that aid managers in their communication inside and outside of an organization. Metaphors are identifiable as important tools useful in crafting advertising messages (Batra, 2002) whereby metaphors work on the assumption that the message receiver can identify a similarity between two terms or objects not normally associated together. Advertising audiences thereby transfer the attributes of one term or object to another. The identification of these attributes, common to both objects, enables the consumer to establish the advertising message (Mortimer and Lloyd, 2006).

Metaphors assist in explaining, interpreting, categorizing, and summarizing a company, product, brand, or other phenomenon and are basic to language and cognition; metaphors structure human thinking and serve to reveal unconscious thinking (Coulter *et al.*, 2001; Zaltman, 1996, 2003; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995). The corporate brand as a person, or as an animal, whereby human anthropomorphized characteristics are ascribed to a brand, is one of the most common metaphoric form in the branding literature (Hanby, 1999).

The brand personality metaphor. The concept of brand character or brand personality has been included in communications copy strategies since the mid-1970s (Plummer, 2000). Plummer (2000) identifies two faces of brand personality: input, that is, what advertisers want consumers/stakeholders to think and feel, and take away from the communication; and second, what consumers/stakeholders actually do, think, and feel about the brand. Similarly, CBR is both a planned strategy in managing a brand, and an outcome, potentially, of the management of brand communications (Woodside, 2010).

These two perspectives on brand personality are expressible in the brand personality statement and in the brand personality profiles, which are based on perceptions of the brand (Plummer, 2000, p. 80). The idea emerges that the five dimensions of human personality may also apply to the personality of brands (Batra *et al.*, 1993). The brand personality metaphor is predicated on an assumption that people have relationships with brands and that those relationships can be varied (Fournier, 1998).

Brand personality drivers. Aaker (1997) seeks to address the issue that, while research in personality psychology conceptualizes human personality, no parallel

research has been conducted on the brand personality construct in terms of those human characteristics which may associate with a brand. Insights into brand personality are considered useful in brand differentiation within a product category, as a central driver of consumer preference, and as a means for managing a brand's communications across cultures (Aaker, 1997).

Aaker (1997) draws on the human personality structure to develop a theoretical framework of brand personality. The importance of brand personality for Aaker (1997) is to enhance the symbolic role of brands thereby strengthening the bond between a brand and the people who identify with it. Personality for Aaker (1997) may build from direct or indirect contact with the brand, the brand's user imagery, product-related attributes, product category associations, brand properties, and demographic characteristics such as age and class (Aaker, 1997, pp. 347-348).

The attempt to assess a corporate brand's CBR potential is quite distinct from attempts to see the brand in terms of its personality as defined in terms of a set of human characteristics (Aaker, 1997; Chun and Davies, 2006). Aaker's (1997) description of Absolut vodka and of its competitors and Chun and Davies's (2006) application of Aaker's scale to companies, is viewable as a reaction against a utilitarian, functionalist approach to brand evaluation. Aaker writes her seminal paper when the iPod was not yet invented and when Starbucks was a predominantly North American brand. Aaker's (1997) brand personality scale, with its focus on the five key attributes of sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, may not be adequate to address what is critical to the success of brands that may be partners in a more intense relationship.

The research focus of Davies and Chun (2003) is on metaphors relevant to an understanding of brands in terms of what some people do in their personal, secular relationships. Such a secular perspective has implications for brand loyalty and diverges from the focus of this paper which is on a consumer experience which can best be understood as CBR.

Drama and the dramaturgical perspective

Woodside *et al.* (2008) build on the anthropomorphic dimension of a brand and develop a narrative theory of how consumers use brands as props. The researchers extend sociological work on the dramaturgical aspects of the presentation of self in everyday life (Goffman, 1990) and provide insights into drama structure, drama enactment, and drama content. Drama structure refers to formal components of drama; drama enactment to the level of consumer involvement or activities (e.g. active to passive), which can shape the drama performance; drama content to what may be observable or unobservable (Woodside *et al.*, 2008).

Drama enactment, according to Woodside *et al.* (2008), may include conversations and actions: conversations between one or more human participants as well as between a stakeholder and one or more brands, and on a conscious and an unconscious level. The archetype a marketer's story produces in a brand drama should match with the intended customer's archetypal, mostly, or entirely unconscious yearnings. The interpretation of the meaning of such drama and its significance for brand marketers could be questioned on scientific grounds. Yet the *Verstehen*, an inference based on an analogy, is a legitimate procedure in an empirical study of human behavior (Munch, 1957; Weber, 1947).

The nature and properties of CBR

The domain of the sacred, as distinct from the profane, is important to marketing theory and practice (Belk *et al.*, 1989). An interpretive anthropology, inspired by

interpretive sociology (Weber, 1978), attempts to understand the sacred within a broad cultural and symbolic domain. Such an approach incorporates thick description (Geertz, 1973) based on an (emic) interpretation of people's own interpretations or stories of events and based on the anthropologist's empirical knowledge. The approach may approximate to a phenomenology that looks at essential structures and meanings and is exemplified by Eliade (1963a, b) and incorporates religious symbolism, the structure and function of myth, and the structural study of sacred time, space, and history (Eliade, 1963a, b).

The domain of this study is folklore and myth which incorporate archetypal characters whose power and meaning from time to time break through the social structure (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Scripts, vignettes, and myth themes offer a rich source of material for analysis and interpretation (Levy, 1981). The psychological state of CBR which is the subject of this paper is a form of ecstasy or of exaltation; a state of being carried away by overwhelming emotion; a state of elated bliss (Princeton University Cognitive Science Lab, 2005).

Variations of rapture experience. Christian fundamentalist beliefs in the rapture illustrate how a personal reinterpretation of religious doctrine can provide a meaning system to legitimize what may be considered to be out-of-character, dysfunctional activities (Banks, 1997). There is evidence on the consideration of brand fetishes among guitar mavens of a form of transubstantiation when followers become attached to collaterally produced or replica models of guitars once used by revered guitarists (Fernandez and Lastovicka, 2011). Corporate brands like Gibson, Fender, Gretsch, Hohner, Wurlitzer, and Rickenbacker have a passionate following among musicians and collectors.

Brand love. Brand love is a recent marketing construct (Batra *et al.*, 2012; Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). Brand identification and sense of community are antecedents of brand love, and brand loyalty and active engagement are its outcomes (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010, p. 504). The sense of community is directly related to brand love and not indirectly via brand identification (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010). Some researchers note that hedonic product categories and self-expressive brands may be associated with stronger brand love (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Others distinguish between functional, symbolic and experiential brand concepts (Park *et al.*, 1986).

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) define brand love as the degree of passionate attachment that a satisfied consumer has for a particular trade name. A critical difference emerges between the thinking of Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010) and that of Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) with respect to the belief of the former that brand love is interpersonal and interactive, and the latter researchers who see the person in the love relationship as a more passive recipient of the brand's love, in the way researchers into mother love see its development in a child according to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1997). The passive role of the consumer is evident in the description of the brand love measure, "We measured brand love with two items, one measuring expressed love and another measuring the sense of loss in the case of unavailability" (Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen, 2010, p. 509). More recently (Batra *et al.*, 2012), brand love is seen as best represented as a higher-order construct including multiple cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, which consumers organize into a mental prototype. These are seen (Batra *et al.*, 2012, p. 2) "to include, but go beyond, brand attachment (Thomson *et al.*, 2005) and self-brand connections" (Escalas and Bettman, 2003). CBR is an elaborated relationship and attachment is a restricted relationship (Bernstein, 1966). CBR is co-created and its thought processes are interactive. Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010, p. 507) make a

considerable contribution to the development of a CBR construct in their discussion of a sense of community, of a sense of kinship or affiliation a customer feels with other people. Bergkvist and Bech-Larsen (2010, p. 505) see the sense of (brand) community as “similar to the self-categorization (or cognitive) dimension of social identity.”

Based on this analysis of the literature and of the theory, CBR and X-stakeholder theory includes several propositions:

- P1.* Nearly all corporate brands have some X-stakeholders.
- P2.* X-stakeholder relationships cut across functional, symbolic, and experiential brand categories.
- P3.* Some brand strategists are successful at cultivating the growth of X-stakeholders.
- P4.* X-stakeholders are often brand gurus (namely, Warren Buffet for the Coca-Cola Company and Procter and Gamble) – the sources that influence opinion leaders (OLs) and through OLs, opinion followers (OFs).
- P5.* X-stakeholders interpret/explain the archetypal meaning of brand-consumer experiences for OLs and subsequently for OLs and OFs discussions.

Theoretical orientation and propositions

The theoretical orientation adopted is toward CBR as a powerful component in building legitimacy, in the sense of a right for an organization to exist and to act in a particular way (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975). A central assumption of this paper is that by providing a basis for legitimacy, CBR makes an important contribution to a company's reputation management. The paper hopes to make a contribution to theory by providing a definition of the CBR construct and by examining the contribution of CBR to building the corporate brand. A further theoretical dimension of this paper is toward the implicit content of brand communications. This orientation is grounded in the research literature discussed earlier in relation to: the influence of unconscious thinking on behavior (Hofstede, 2003; Jung, 1969; Wegner, 2002; Woodside, 2008); the relevance of transference to brand communications and its importance to high-involvement social and brand enactments (Freud, 1964; Megehee and Woodside, 2010); the importance of social identity as a driver of stakeholder-brand drama enactment (Bourdieu, 1984; Riesman *et al.*, 2001); the power of metaphoric and anthropomorphic dimensions of the brand in marketing communications (Batra, 2002; Coulter *et al.*, 2001; Zaltman, 1996, 2003; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995); the important role of drama enactment in enabling participants (storytellers) to experience power myths that reflect psychological archetypes (Woodside *et al.*, 2008).

CBR as a concept is deeply embedded in the theory of the communications process. Traditionally, the communications process involves a sender and a recipient. An intended message is encoded, is transferred to the recipient via a channel, and the message is de-coded by the recipient. A basic assumption is that congruence occurs of the intended and received message. In CBR communications there is an explicit message, and an implicit message, which is grounded in brand intangibles and with strong symbolic and archetypal content. The implicit message is the most important communications element for most loyal stakeholders (see Figure 1).

In the CBR communications model levels of communication are well understood by the sender; they are part of the sender's *modus operandi*. They may very well be representative of a tacit understanding between the sender and the recipient; a direct line that is an expression of a creative and highly emotion-laden context of which they are both participants. If the explicit and the implicit meaning of the communication are congruent, then the message may not elicit a response conducive to brand-rapture. If the implicit meaning is dominant and is interpreted and understood correctly by the recipient, then the message is more likely to elicit a response conducive to brand-rapture.

An interpretation of a brand communication's code (Rapaille, 2007) may not be a straightforward, short-term cognitive process. Interpretation of a brand's code may be a longer term, acting out, and translation of the brand's relevance for the individual. An outcome of a positive interpretation is the acting out of the brand drama in which deep personal needs and issues are transferred on to the brand, and a process of enactment ensues.

This discussion of theoretical orientation suggests the relevance of two further, testable, research propositions:

- P6.* The probability that a low brand-rapture receptive stakeholder will accept a direct brand communication's message is higher than the probability that a high brand-rapture receptive stakeholder will.
- P7.* The probability that a high brand-rapture receptive stakeholder accept an implicit brand communication message is higher than the probability of a low brand-rapture stakeholder doing so.

The study here includes reviews of relevant literature that expand the deep implicit and explicit emotional attachment, beliefs, attitudes, decision processes (Woodside, 2008), and behavior toward brands. Several mixes of ingredients (antecedents) may be possible to achieve a CBR recipe specific to a brand. The methodological approach addresses this perspective. Critical evaluation of the literature informs recognition of the importance of certain antecedents and consequences of CBR as Figure 2 shows. These antecedents and consequences include the following topics and perspectives.

Context

The corporate brand is conducive to and provides opportunities for drama, enactment, a sense of place, and an experience like no other.

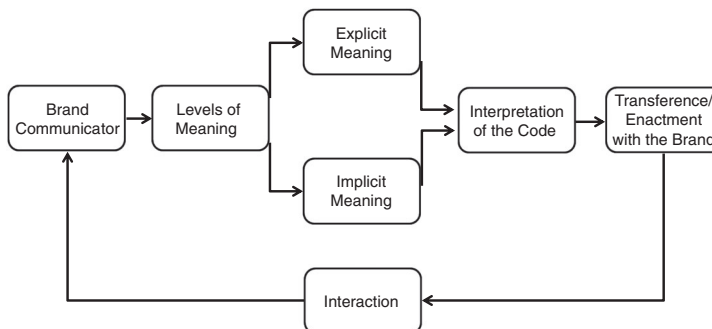


Figure 1.
A model of CBR communication



Figure 2.
The CBR causal recipe

Evocative symbol and name

The corporate brand name and symbol are evocative and memorable. They help advance the brand to a well recognized, potentially iconic, status. The name evokes a quality that goes beyond everyday awareness.

Antithesis

The brand provides an antithesis to current thinking. The company is prepared to take a stand and to provide a challenge to orthodoxy. This dynamic stand may move the market, the category, and the sector forward. The brand experience may evoke a sense of danger during which the consumer experiences an inciting moment that focusses attention on results in action (McKee, 2003).

Authenticity

The company's business model may be contrary to other companies at a given time. Rather than focussing on the sale, management focusses on generating revenue from an experience (Atwal and Williams, 2009) that is unlike any other. The company's commitment is authentic and adds to the perception of the brand's positive and supportive approach.

Audience

As in the case of the late Steve Jobs and Apple, and Richard Branson and Virgin, the brand is never without an audience. The brand communicates fully as a source of energy and fulfilment and not a drag on strengths and energies.

Transformation

The brand offers its partners a break with the past and a sense of renewal. The brand engenders a feeling of excitement, of exuberance, and of ebullience; overflowing with eager enjoyment or approval. The brand may serve as a dynamic route to a new, updated self-concept (Fernandez and Lastovicka, 2011).

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Dedicated strong binding

The corporate brand creates strong, binding relationships. Loyal partners are passionate, emotionally committed, and inspired. This may derive from a brand experience that brings about a sense of calm; a peaceful feeling of satisfaction, and of a more improvisational presentation of self can begin to be felt in everyday life (Woodside *et al.*, 2008). As a result the brand commands a passionate loyalty.

Shared identity

Congruence of brand and self-identity provides opportunities for deeper involvement and co-creation. A rapturous brand experience is about sociability and engagement. This social networking relationship can provide a powerful message-based context for shared experience and a shared identity (Scott and Halligan, 2010).

Research methods

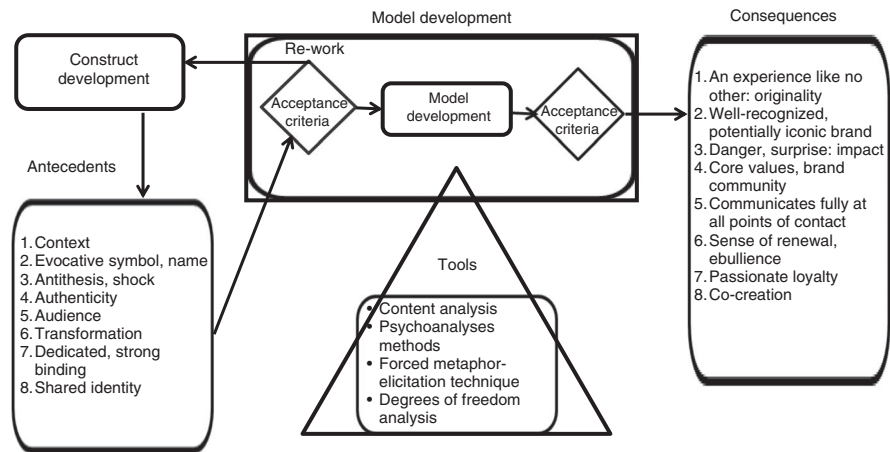
The study develops analytical insights into CBR, its antecedents and consequences, and establishes a methodology for a modeling process. This purpose is predicated on the belief that CBR is a valid, operational concept in marketing of interest to researchers and to marketing management. Insights into such emotionally laden relationships serve to inform researchers, and internal and external stakeholders of intimate thoughts about brands that can have a powerful effect on what induces and what inhibits favorable brand interaction and engagement; interaction that incorporates roles in stories crafted through implicit thinking (Woodside, 2008, p. 480).

The Deming process workbench model (Norton, 1995) provides a framework within which to establish a CBR model (see Figure 3). A CBR model requires a clear understanding of the construct. The Deming process workbench model allows construct definition, the clarification of antecedents and of those consequences that have relevance for researchers and corporate brand marketers. The process workbench model shows the relationships between antecedents and the development of consequences of CBR. Each workbench frame represents the boundaries, or span of control, for the process (Norton, 1995).

Construct development provides data in the form of a list of antecedents for the research process to transform into the required end output (consequences). Model development includes entrance criteria which is the required quality of the antecedents. Criteria help determine the acceptability of input; entrance criteria are identical to exit criteria. The consequences of CBR are the output of the strategic development process. Research tools ensure validity and strategic fit of the consequences of CBR.

Research tools include the following four methods: method one includes content analysis of corporate brand communications and blog postings by X-stakeholders,

Figure 3.
CBR workbench
development model



photographic and textual reports. An assumption in this research is that CBR always involves stakeholders' transformation into a new identity by going through an archetypal experience. Transference theory, archetypal, culture, and early experiences also serve to inform the etic interpretations of an informant's self-report that provides case-study data including storytelling and paradox resolution by informants (Woodside, 2008). Woodside (2008) places considerable value on examining implicit and explicit beliefs, attitudes, decision processes, and behavior toward corporate brands and their products and services.

Method two likely needs to include psychoanalyses tools. Such techniques have relevance for CBR which always involves a consumer's transformation into an experience of an archetypal force. Rapture can be experienced as a form of catharsis, a purging of the personal identity that may have similar strength as a sexual climax. Psychoanalyses techniques, therefore, with their sensitivity to transference and projection, provides an appropriate, adjustable method to achieve self-directed metrics and responses to learn more about CBR ingredient recipes.

Method three consists of stakeholders' stories crafted through implicit thinking (Woodside, 2008, p. 480). The forced metaphor-elicitation technique (FMET) is an adjustable method to achieve self-directed metrics and responses to understand CBR ingredient recipes. The FMET technique helps researchers, for example, to permit zoomorphic explications of self-viewing of human self-behavior in terms of the behavior of animals (Woodside, 2008). FMET provides case-study data including storytelling and paradox resolution by informants. FMET helps surface implicit beliefs and feelings about self, and to learn how such implicit beliefs and feelings associate with product designs and brand choices (Woodside, 2004). Earlier research on subjective personal introspection (Gould, 1995; Holbrook, 2006), and the dual systems perspective toward the explicit and implicit, support the approach taken for this research tool. Theories of unconscious thinking contribute valuable insights that increase understanding of how and why implicit thinking affects beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and mental processes (Woodside, 2008).

A fourth method consists of degrees of freedom analysis (DFA) for CBR. The researchers assume that that CBR involves a mix of components, or ingredients. Not all ingredients are ever present. Several different combinations of ingredients may be

possible to achieve a CBR mix. DFA is a valuable technique for comparing specific cases to theory and for theory development (Wilson and Woodside, 1999).

Wilson and Woodside's (1999) approach to DFA is to generalize case data to theory rather than to generalize the data to a population. DFA employs the technique of "pattern-matching" between theoretical propositions and observations in a set of data (Campbell, 1975). In this study DFA will be used in the development and testing of a "matrix" (Wilson and Woodside, 1999, p. 217) which sets up the "pattern: based on theory that is to be confirmed or repudiated." This research follows Wilson and Woodside's (1999, p. 217) guideline which views a theory-in-use as the "set of propositions guiding the behavior of the decision-maker" which in this research is the behavior and the conscious and unconscious thinking of the person relative to a corporate brand.

No known theory of CBR is available currently. Having this perspective, from the research of the four theories that Wilson and Woodside (1999) tests, the bounded rationality model would appear to sit more comfortably with the dynamics of CBR. The bounded rationality theory proposes that while decision makers try to be rational, they are constrained by cognitive limitations, habits, and biases (Wilson and Woodside, 1999, p. 218). Corporate brand management will find assessing the level of relationship strength between a brand and its loyalest brand adherents to be helpful. CBR auditing provides corporate brand marketing management with a metric useful for estimating the level of brand relationship strength on distinct levels.

Conclusion and research implications

This paper provides a working definition of the CBR construct and contributes to the development of a theory that explains how CBR works. By exploring CBR this paper examines deeply the interrelationships between stakeholder characteristics, ritualized behavior, and material and non-material objects (Fernandez and Lastovicka, 2011; Mauss, 1990). The paper provides a research-model protocol for further analysis of the antecedents and consequences of CBR. The working definition of CBR in this study is that CBR is the co-created, sacrosanct state that a stakeholder achieves in enactments with a very special corporate brand. Such enactments are experiences that are specific to certain contexts and are emotionally overwhelming. The identification of this dynamic concept underpins the conscious and unconscious drivers of the brand's strongest stakeholders and laying the foundations of research into CBR communications.

Implications for marketing management

Corporate brand marketing communications strategies that seek to create a relationship of engagement between the brand and its most loyal stakeholders are essential to marketing management, and to the marketing discipline overall. Insights into such emotionally laden relationships serve to inform corporate brand marketers of intimate thoughts about brands that can have a powerful effect on what induces and what prevents stakeholders from engaging with certain brands. It is argued in this paper that CBR provides a more powerful form of source credibility than other metaphorical brand concepts, including corporate brand personality.

Eight antecedents of CBR are identified. First, context; a sense of pace and an experience like no other. Second, and evocative symbol or name that evokes a quality that goes beyond everyday experience. Third, antithesis; a dynamic stand that may move the market forward. Fourth, authenticity; a commitment to the corporate brand's

identity. Audience, and sense of energy and excitement shared with it. Sixth, transformation and a dynamic route to a new, updated self-concept. Seventh, a dedicated strong binding with passionate, emotionally committed, and inspired partners. Finally, a shared identity: a congruence of brand and self-identity that provides for deeper involvement and for co-creation.

Eight consequences of CBR are posited: An experience like no other: originality; a well recognized, potentially iconic brand; a sense of danger, surprise: impact; the sharing of core values by a brand community; communicating fully at all points of contact; a sense of renewal, ebullience; passionate loyalty; co-creation.

The definitions, discussion, and clarification of processes related to CBR may benefit brand marketers through more effective use of CBR communications strategies targeting stakeholder segments (Lloyd, 2011) which may consist primarily of the most loyal and heaviest users. Alternatively, CBR brand communications strategies should be considered as a means for achieving sought-after loyalty and engagement.

Implications for future research

The tools (e.g. the CBR causal recipe) and the conceptual model (e.g. the model of CBR communication) can be operationalized and tested empirically. Several of the propositions in this research, for instance propositions for the origins of unconscious thinking: the proposition that archetypes guide aspects of behavior (Jung, 1969); the illusory nature of the mind unable to identify the causes of its own actions (Wegner, 2002); an unconscious cultural influence that distinguishes one group from another (Hofstede, 2003) are supported by the recent literature (e.g. Woodside, 2008).

This study proposes seven fundamental propositions for modeling CBR:

- P1. Nearly all corporate brands have some X-stakeholders.
- P2. X-stakeholder relationships cut across functional, symbolic, and experiential brand categories.
- P3. Some brand strategists are successful at cultivating the growth of X-stakeholders.
- P4. X-stakeholders are often brand gurus (namely, Warren Buffet for The Coca-Cola Company and Procter and Gamble) – the sources that influence opinion leaders (OLs) and through OLs, opinion followers (OFs).
- P5. X-stakeholders interpret/explain the archetypal meaning of brand-consumer experiences for OLs and subsequently for OLs and OFs discussions.
- P6. The probability that a low brand-rapture receptive stakeholder will accept a direct brand communication's message is higher than the probability that a high brand-rapture receptive stakeholder will.
- P7. The probability that a high brand-rapture receptive stakeholder accept an implicit brand communication message is higher than the probability that a low brand-rapture stakeholder doing so.

Theses propositions are testable empirically.

CBR is a potentially powerful and dynamic corporate brand marketing and communications concept. A goal of engendering CBR, if integrated effectively into corporate brand marketing communications campaigns, has the potential to achieve a range of communications objectives. In order to develop fully a CBR theory, it is important that the focal construct be studied systematically in a way that it clearly explains its interlinkages with other constructs and also discuss the variables that will help researchers to measure the construct, if required. This is an intended outcome of completing the CBR workbench development process. At this future stage the epistemological and ontological aspects of the CBR construct would be stated.

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